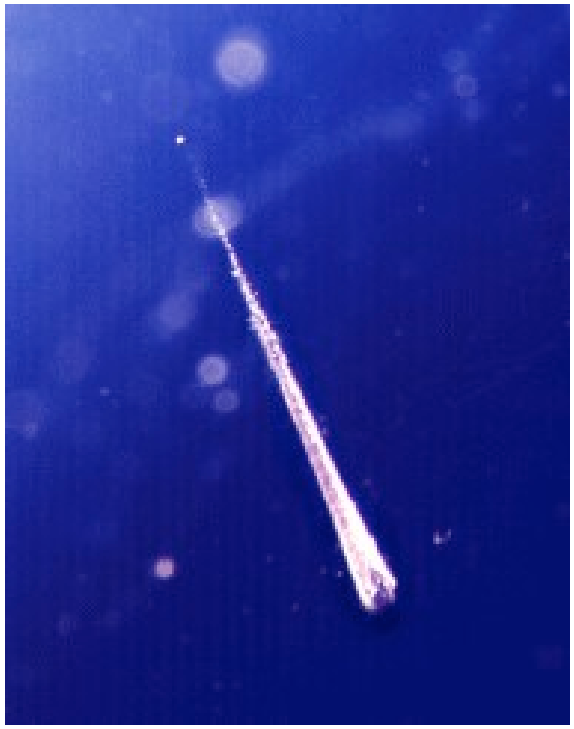
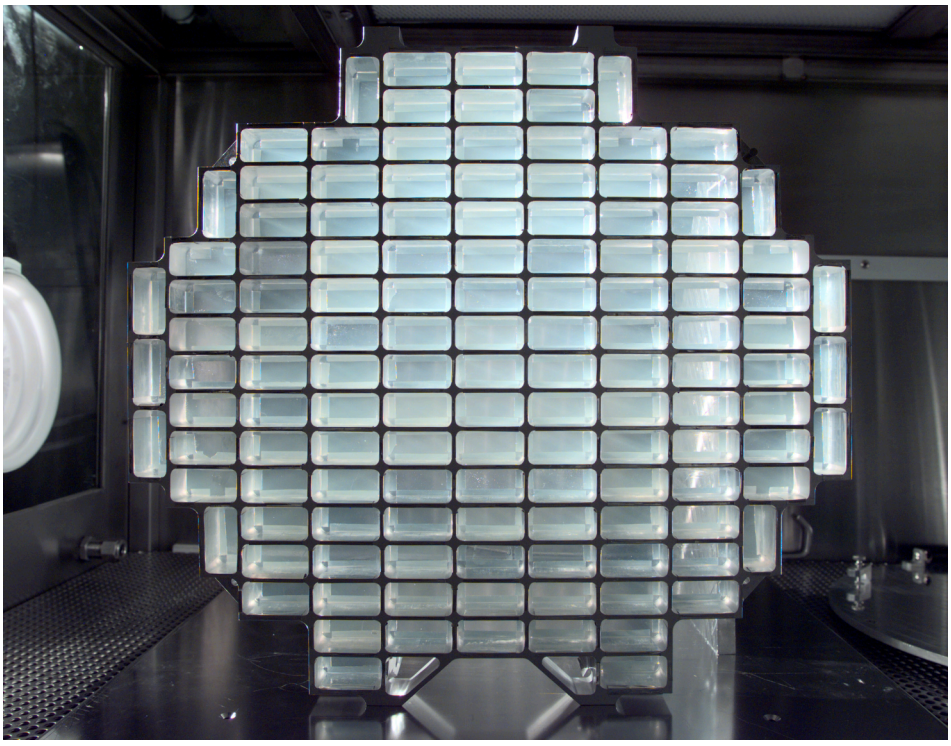
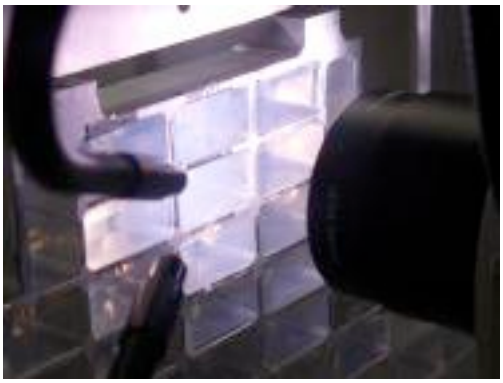
Aerogel:

Stardust Collection Material

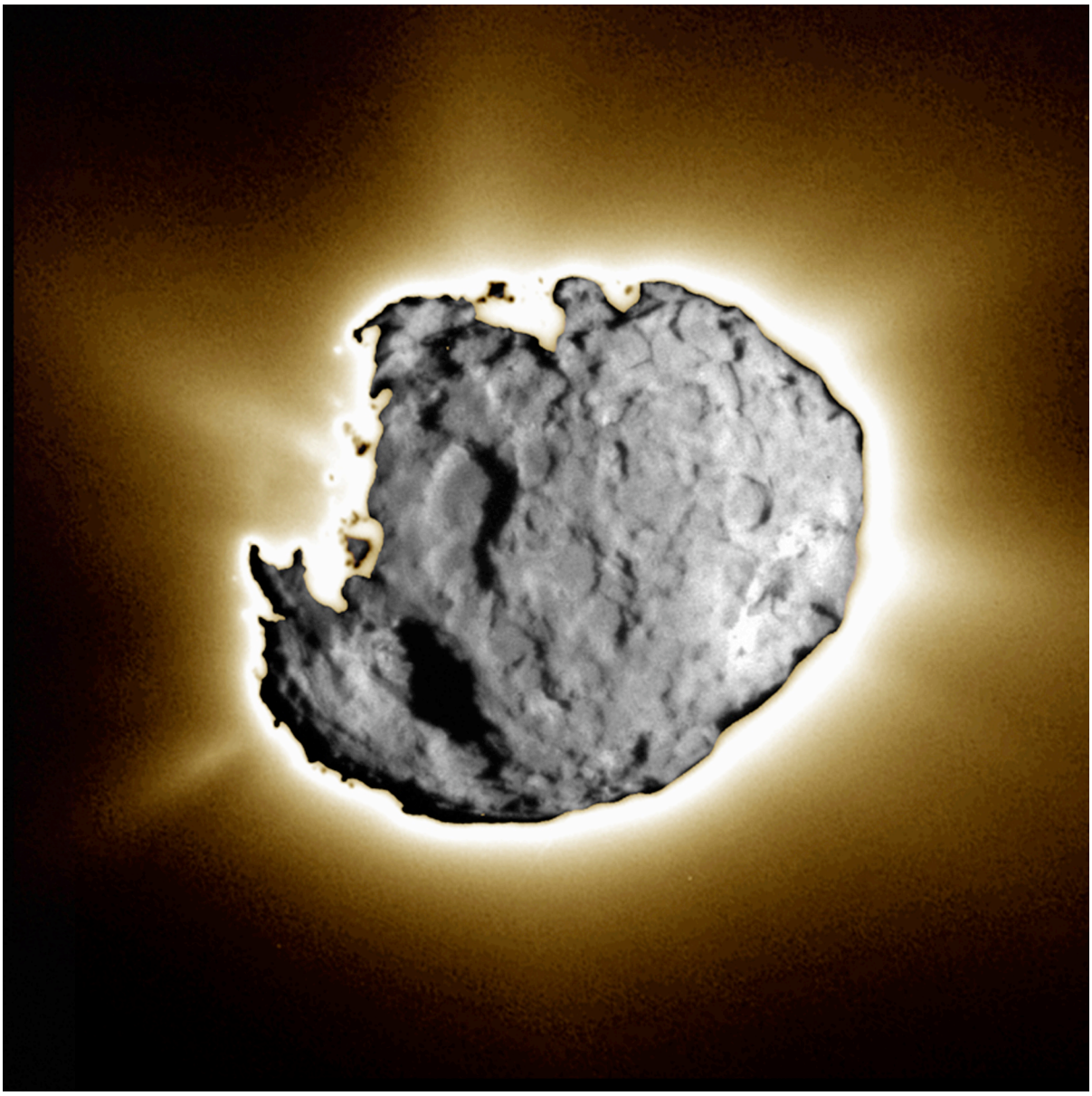




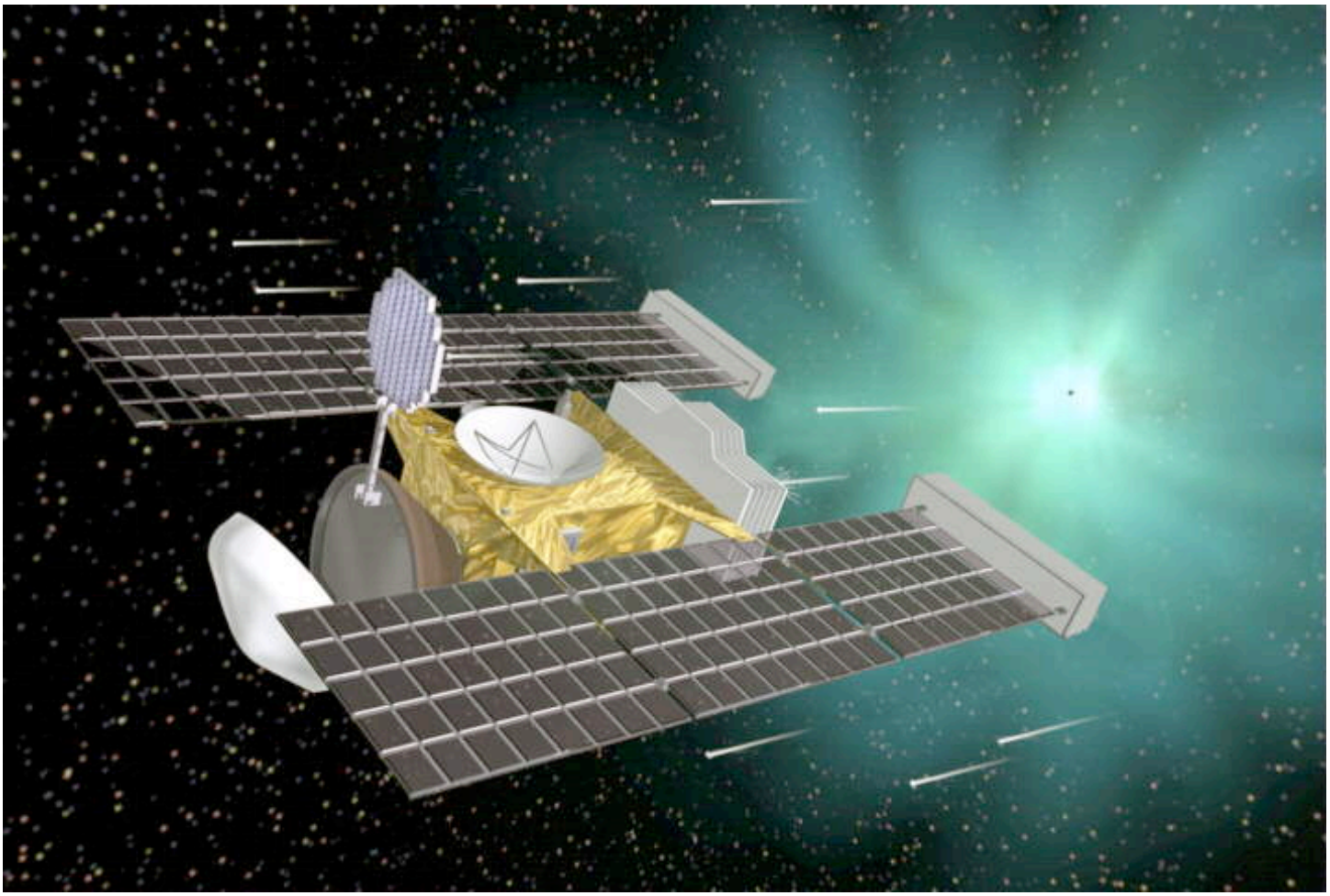
NASA's Stardust sample return capsule successfully landed at the U.S. Air Force Utah Test and Training Range at 2:10 a.m. Pacific time. The capsule contains cometary and interstellar samples gathered by the Stardust spacecraft.



Scientists work in a temporary clean lab in Utah to assess the Sample Return Capsule. All samples are then shipped unopened to Johnston Space Center in Houston, where analysis begins.



This is a composite image of the nucleus of Comet Wild 2 made from photographs taken by the Stardust Spacecraft. Notice the jets of gas subliming off the frozen nucleus. These gases and dust grains surround the nucleus to form a coma, which appears to glow as it absorbs and reemits sunlight. The solar wind can blow this coma into the two tails, one dust, one gas, that may be seen coming from some comets when they are close to the sun.



The NASA Stardust Spacecraft is about the size of a small car. It traveled over 2 billion miles to collect comet dust and return that dust to Earth.